

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY
INFO AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

UNCLAS STATE 294182

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TGEN, ENRG, BR

SUBJECT: PRESS CONFERENCE ON WASHINGTON POST STORY

REF: USINFO 071458 DECEMBER 77

1. STORY ON SECRETARY VANCE'S TRIP TO BRAZIL IN WASHINGTON POST OF DECEMBER 7 (REFTEL) PRODUCED FOLLOWING EXCHANGE IN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING ON SAME DAY.

2. BEGIN QUOTE:

Q. KEN, THE POST HAD AN INTERESTING DESCRIPTION TODAY ABOUT THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO BRAZIL LAST MONTH. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING CONFIRMING OR DENYING THE SUBSTANCE OF THAT STORY?

A. GEORGE, THE STORY IS AN INACCURATE PORTRAYAL OF OUR UNCLASSIFIED

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DISCUSSIONS IN BRAZIL DURING THE SECRETARY'S VISIT.

Q. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

A. WELL, THE SECRETARY, WE FEEL, HAD IN DEPTH DISCUSSIONS WITH BRAZILIAN OFFICIALS, THE RESULTS OF WHICH AND THE CONTENTS OF WHICH WE TAKE VERY SERIOUSLY. I

COULD NOTE TO YOU THAT THE SECRETARY, WHEN HE WAS THERE, INFORMED THE BRAZILIANS OF THE TALKS THAT HE HAD JUST

CONCLUDED IN ARGENTINA. HE DID NOT "WARN" THE BRAZILIANS OF ANYTHING, INCLUDING AN IMPENDING NUCLEAR ARMS RACE IN THE REGION.

HE RESTATED OUR POSITION ON REPROCESSING --

Q. EXCUSE ME. YOU SAY, "HE DID NOT WARN THE BRAZILIANS -- ?"

A. THERE WAS AN ALLEGATION THAT HE HAD "WARNED" THE BRAZILIANS. HE DID NOT WARN THE BRAZILIANS OF ANYTHING, INCLUDING AN IMPENDING NUCLEAR ARMS RACE IN THE REGION.

Q. ARE YOU QUARRELING WITH THE WORD "WARNED" OR WITH THE FACT THAT THE SUBJECT MATTER WAS RAISED.?

A. WELL, I WOULD QUARREL WITH THE CHOICE OF THE WORD "WARNED" AND I AM TRYING TO GIVE YOU AN OVERALL VIEW OF THE SUBJECT MATTER.

Q. BUT YOU ARE NOT DISPUTING THE FACT THAT HE DID NOT RAISE THE PROSPECT THAT THERE COULD BE A NUCLEAR ARMS RACE IN SOUTH AMERICA IF BOTH ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL PRO-
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CEED WITH NUCLEAR REPROCESSING EQUIPMENT?

A. I HAVE NOTHING TO INDICATE THAT THE IDEA OF AN "ARMS RACE" WAS DISCUSSED. BUT HE DID STATE OUR POSITION ON REPROCESSING.

THE BRAZILIANS RESTATED THEIRS.

Q. THAT'S NOT TO "ENCOURAGE REPROCESSING" IS IT?

A. NO.

Q. IT'S TO DISCOURAGE REPROCESSING.

A. WELL, I THINK OUR POSITION ON THIS IS FAIRLY WELL KNOWN, AS THE REPROCESSING OF NUCLEAR MATERIALS.

Q. I AM JUST TRYING TO GET THE THRUST OF WHAT YOU ARE SAYING HERE. YOU ARE SAYING THE SECRETARY DID NOT WARN THE BRAZILIANS OF ANYTHING?

A. YES. I'M SAYING HE DIDN'T WARN -- THE ARTICLE ASSERTS THAT THERE WAS WARNING ABOUT AN IMPENDING NUCLEAR ARMS RACE.

HE DIDN'T GO DOWN TO WARN THEM. HE WENT DOWN TO DISCUSS --

Q. HE EXPRESSED NO CONCERN ABOUT A NUCLEAR ARMS RACE IN SOUTH AMERICA?

A. I CAN'T REALLY GET INTO THE SPECIFIC CONTENTS OF CONCERNS EXPRESSED, BUT I CAN TELL YOU GENERALLY THAT HE RESTATED OUR POSITION ON REPROCESSING. THE BRAZILIANS RESTATED THEIRS.

AS YOU KNOW, THESE VIEWS DIFFER. BOTH SIDES ACKNOWLEDGED UNCLASSIFIED

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THOSE DIFFERENCES. BUT WE AND THE BRAZILIANS AGREED THAT FURTHER TECHNICAL TALKS ON THE ISSUE COULD BE HELPFUL.

WE ALSO EXPRESSED, AGAIN, OUR DESIRE TO WORK WITH BRAZIL IN VARYING FIELDS, INCLUDING THE NUCLEAR FIELD.

WE BROUGHT NO NEW PROPOSALS TO BRAZIL.

WE SOUGHT, WE HOPE SUCCESSFULLY, TO REOPEN A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE ON QUESTIONS OF SERIOUS AND MUTUAL INTEREST.

Q. WHAT PART OF THE STORY WAS INACCURATE? WAS IT JUST THE USE OF THE VERB? YOU DON'T LIKE "WARNED?"

A. MARVIN, I REALLY DON'T HAVE ANY MORE ON IT THAN WHAT I HAVE RIGHT HERE.

Q. THIS SEEMS TO BE A MATTER OF FORM. TWICE IN THIS BRIEFING YOU HAVE SAID TWO STORIES ARE INACCURATE, AND YOU REALLY DON'T TELL US IN WHAT WAY THEY ARE INACCURATE. I HOPE THAT YOU ARE NOT GETTING INTO THAT KIND OF A PATTERN.

Q. WELL, THIS HAS BEEN THE PATTERN HERE RECENTLY. WE HAVE HAD INNUMERABLE STORIES LABELED "INACCURATE" AND A REFUSAL TO EXPLAIN WHAT THE SPOKESMAN IS TALKING ABOUT.

HERE, THE SUBSTANCE OF THIS STORY IS THAT THE SECRETARY'S TRIP WAS QUITE UNSUCCESSFUL AND THE BRAZILIANS HAVE BEEN STATING, AFTER HE LEFT, THAT THERE WAS NO PROSPECT FOR HIM TO SUCCEED.

AND YOU HAVE COME ALONG AND SAID THAT THIS IS AN IN- UNCLASSIFIED

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ACCURATE PORTRAYAL OF THE DISCUSSIONS IN BRAZIL. YOU HAVE GIVEN US NO REASON TO SUBSTANTIATE WHAT YOU HAVE SAID EXCEPT TO QUARREL WITH ONE WORD: "WARNED."

A. MURREY, THERE IS SOMETHING THAT I CAN ADD TO THIS,

AND IT GOES BACK TO A QUESTION THAT WAS RAISED EARLIER:

THERE WAS A GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE RISKS POSED FOR
REGIONAL SECURITY BY PREMATURE ENTRY INTO REPROCESSING.

Q. WHO INITIATED THAT DISCUSSION?

A. I COULDN'T SAY.

Q. THAT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN RAISED BY THE BRAZILIANS,
WOULD IT?

A. THE THRUST OF THE QUESTION GOES TO THE COMPARISON OF
THE BRAZILIAN PROGRAM AND THE ARGENTINIAN PROGRAM. I CAN
NOTE THAT WE DID NOT DISCUSS ARGENTINE REPROCESSING PLANS
WITH BRAZIL OR WARN BRAZIL ABOUT ANY ASPECT OF THE
ARGENTINE NUCLEAR PROGRAM.

Q. HOW DOES A COUNTRY MATURE INTO --

A. I'M SORRY, I CAN'T HEAR YOU.

Q. I'M SAYING, HOW DOES A COUNTRY MATURE INTO BEING PER-
MITTED OR ENCOURAGED TO ENTER THE REPROCESSING?

A. I AM REALLY NOT PREPARED TO GO INTO A REVIEW OF OUR
VIEWS ON THIS, BUT I THINK THEY HAVE BEEN FAIRLY CLEARLY
STATED.

Q. KEN, WHEN YOU SAY -- WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT "RISKS" FOR
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REGIONAL SECURITY -- YOU ARE SAYING THAT SOMEBODY TALKED
ABOUT A DANGER OF A REGIONAL NUCLEAR ARMS RACE IN SOUTH
AMERICA.

WHO WAS THAT? DID THE U.S. RAISE IT? OR DID BRAZIL TALK
ABOUT THAT?

A. I SAID THERE WAS A GENERAL DISCUSSION AND, THEREFORE,
BOTH SIDES WERE INVOLVED IN THE DISCUSSION. I DON'T KNOW
WHO ACTUALLY MENTIONED IT FIRST IN CONVERSATION BUT IT IS
SOMETHING THAT WAS OF OBVIOUS PERTINENCE FOR BOTH SIDES.

Q. BUT WHAT IS INACCURATE ABOUT IT? WHAT IS INACCURATE
ABOUT THE STORY?

A. MARVIN, I DON'T HAVE THE DETAILS OTHER THAN WHAT I
HAVE OUTLINED TO YOU HERE.

Q. WELL DON'T YOU FEEL, AS THE SPOKESMAN, WHEN YOU COME OUT AND SAY THAT -- YOU ARE SAYING SOMETHING ON BEHALF OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT --

A. THAT'S RIGHT.

Q. -- ABOUT A STORY THAT'S APPEARED.

YOU SAY IT'S INACCURATE, WHICH IS NOT A VERY FLATTERING THING TO SAY -- AND THEN YOU DO NOT SUPPORT YOUR STATEMENT.

Q. AND AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE STATEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE SUPPORT THE STORY.

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A. OBVIOUSLY, WE DON'T WANT TO GET INTO AN ARGUMENT WITH THE JOURNALIST; BUT WE WANTED TO PRESENT WHAT WE CONSIDER TO BE A GENERAL, ACCURATE, VIEW OF WHAT TOOK PLACE -- WITHOUT GOING INTO DETAILS THAT WE WOULDN'T CONSIDER IT APPROPRIATE TO GO INTO.

Q. I WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT, THEN, RECONSIDER ITS GENERAL FORM OF COMMENT ABOUT STORIES.

IF IT WANTS TO SAY THAT THERE ARE SOME WORDS OR SOME CHARACTERIZATION IN A STORY TO WHICH IT MAY TAKE EXCEPTION, THEN IT CAN SAY SO AND EXPLAIN WHAT THE EXCEPTIONS ARE.

BUT THIS HABIT OF BLANKET LABELING OF A STORY AS "INACCURATE" AND THEN WALKING AWAY FROM IT, I FIND TOTALLY IRRESPONSIBLE.

A. WELL, MURREY, THERE IS THE DESIRE TO BE RESPONSIVE TO QUESTIONS FROM THE LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS -- AND SOMETIMES, WE CAN ONLY GO SO FAR.

Q. KEN, IN THIS CASE --

A. YES.

Q. YOU SAID THERE WAS A GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH PREMATURE ENTRY INTO NUCLEAR REPROCESSING.

A. YES.

Q. I ASSUME -- THE PRESUMPTION IS THAT SUCH RISKS EXIST.

A. YES.

Q. I SUBMIT TO YOU THAT WHEN SOMEBODY TELLS SOMEBODY
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ELSE THERE IS A RISK, THAT CONSTITUTES A WARNING --
BY DEFINITION OF THE WORLD "WARNING."

A. WELL, "WARNING" IS A PRETTY STRONG TERM IN DIPLOMATIC
USAGE, LARS.

Q. "WARNING" IS TELLING SOMEBODY THAT A RISK EXISTS,
THAT THERE IS A DANGER OF SOMETHING.

THAT IS WHAT WAS DONE IN THIS CASE AND YOU SAID THAT WAS
DONE IN THIS CASE -- AND THAT'S WHAT THE STORY SAID WAS
DONE.

A. WELL, LARS, WE WOULDN'T CHARACTERIZE IT AS A WARNING.

IN REGARD TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ABOUT SOME OF THE OTHER
INACCURACIES OF THE ARTICLE, THERE WAS THE ASSERTION THAT
THERE WAS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF RANCOR AT THE TIME OF THE
DEPUTY SECRETARY'S VISIT. THIS WAS NOT TRUE. THERE WAS
NO RANCOR AT THE TIME OF THAT VISIT TO BRASILIA.

IT WAS A WORKING VISIT. THERE WERE FRANK DISCUSSIONS, BUT
WE WOULD NOT CHARACTERIZE IT AS RANCOR.

IT WAS ASSERTED THAT MR. CHRISTOPHER DEPARTED ABRUPTLY.
HE DID NOT. HE DEPARTED ON SCHEDULE.

Q. AT 2:00 A.M.?

Q. THERE WASN'T ANY RANCOR AT THE DEPARTURE, I GUESS,
BECAUSE THERE WEREN'T ANY BRAZILIANS THERE.

A. IS THERE ANYONE ELSE
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Q. WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE SECRETARY WAS SATISFIED WITH
HIS VISIT TO BRAZIL? DID HE ACCOMPLISH WHAT HE WENT
THERE TO DO?

DID HE CAUTION THE BRAZILIANS?

A. WE WENT OVER THIS. JOHN TRATTNER, WHO ACCOMPANIED
THE SECRETARY, GAVE US A GENERAL VIEW HERE AND DURING
THE VISIT, AS TO WHAT TOOK PLACE.

Q. BUT I MEAN, NOW, IN VIEW OF THIS STORY.

A. NO, I WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO ADD TO WHAT WAS SAID IN THE PAST ABOUT THE TRIP.

YES, SIR.

Q. CONCERNING THE --

Q. EXCUSE ME, BEFORE YOU LEAVE THAT, I DO HAVE ONE FURTHER QUESTION ON THE SUBJECT.

A. YES, MURREY.

Q. YOU ENDED UP SAYING, "WE SOUGHT, WE HOPE SUCCESSFULLY, TO REOPEN A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE ON QUESTIONS OF SERIOUS AND MUTUAL INTEREST."

AND I WOULD LIKE TO SAY, THEN, SPECIFICALLY WHETHER YOU STILL HAVE A HOPE, OR WHETHER THE STATE DEPARTMENT STILL HAS A HOPE THAT BRAZIL WILL RECONSIDER ITS PLAN TO PROCEED WITH A REPROCESSING PLANT.

A. WELL, WE HAVE MADE OUR VIEWS ON THAT CLEAR AND I WOULDN'T SAY THAT WE EXPECT THE BRAZILIANS TO CHANGE
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THEIR MINDS, OR TO CHANGE THEIR PLANS -- BUT THEY KNOW WHERE WE STAND ON IT. UNQUOTE. CHRISTOPHER

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